DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 470 HE 020 608

AUTHOR Nikels, Kenneth W.
TITLE An Introductory Demonstration for Introductory Psychology.
PUB DATE Aug 86
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (Washington, DC, August 22-26, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classroom Techniques; *College Instruction; *Demonstrations (Educational); Higher Education; *Introductory Courses; *Learning Activities; *Psychology

ABSTRACT

The use of a classroom demonstration to introduce students to introductory psychology is described. It is employed early in the semester and has been an effective way to preface many topics and issues that the general psychology course normally includes. The demonstration consists of the class listening to a tape for 5-6 minutes and recording every word or phrase they hear. The tape consists of only one word, but students invariably report a number of words and phrases. In fall 1985, 75 students participated in the demonstration. While the average number of different words reported was 13.04, the range was from a low of 3 words to a high of 28 words. The lists collected from the class resulted in a total of 256 different words. Classroom discussion focuses on a variety of topics, including consciousness, perception, brain function, and projective techniques. The importance of recognizing and appreciating the uniqueness of individuals is also emphasized. An appendix lists words reported by the students. (Author/SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED285470

AN INTRODUCTORY DEMONSTRATION FOR INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY

KENNETH W. NIKELS
Kearney State College

ABSTRACT

A description is provided of a classroom demonstration that is utilized to introduce students to psychology. The demonstration consists of the class listening to a tape for 5-6 minutes and recording every word or phrase they hear. The tape consists of only one word, but students invariably report a number of words and phrases. Results from a previous semester indicated that 256 different words were reported by 75 students. The mean number of words listed by the students was approximately 13. Classroom discussion focuses on a variety of topics, including consciousness, perception, brain function, and projective techniques. The importance of recognizing and appreciating the uniqueness of individuals is also emphasized.

HE 020 608

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Kenneth W. Nikels

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

AN INTRODUCTORY DEMONSTRATION FOR INTRODUCTORY PSYCHOLOGY

KENNETH W. NIKELS

KEARNEY STATE COLLEGE

Classroom demonstrations are becoming an increasingly popular method of involving students in the activity of learning. In addition to the presentation of concepts, principles, and applications, demonstrations may also be utilized by the instructor to introduce the student to a specific topic. The particular demonstration to be described here has proven useful in introducing students to the study of Introductory Psychology. As such, it has been employed early in the semester, and has been found to be an excellent way to preface many of the topics and issues that the introductory course normally includes. Such varied topics as motivation, emotion, consciousness, brain structure and function, individual differences, and projective techniques may be discussed following the demonstration. This paper will describe the demonstration procedures and the results collected in a General Psychology class during the Fall Semester, 1985.

METHOD

On the second meeting of the class, students are told that the topic to be discussed is the psychology of consciousness. After making a few introductory remarks, I ask the students to take out a piece of paper and pencil, and to listen closely to the tape I am about to play. Their task, they are told, is to write down every word or phrase they hear on the tape. I remind them to listen closely to the tape for the 5 to 6 minute period

it will play, and ask the students not to disturb the class with excessive talking or laughter.

The tape, which consists of only the single word "cogitate" repeated continuously in a normal voice, is played for the specified time period. Students are then asked to count the total number of words they have listed. I usually ask those with more than 10, 15, or 20 words to identify themselves by raising their hands, and in the process determine the longest list of words. I then ask for examples from the lists composed. This has been found to be an interesting and enjoyable aspect of the demonstration, and succeeds in getting the students involved.

RESULTS

Seventy-five students participated in the demonstration, and the average number of different words reported was 13.04. The range of the distribution was from a low of 3 words (s=2) to a high of 28 words (s=1). The lists collected from the class resulted in a total of 256 different words, the most prevalent being "concentrate" (s=44; I avoid using this word in my instructions). Other items listed with a relatively high frequency included "patty cake" (s=22), "contemplate" (s=21), "cogitate" (the word on the tape, s=16), "fabricate" (s=16), and "Kearney State" (s=15). The latter is the name of the college, and is particularly helpful when discussion takes place. Some of the more interesting but less frequently reported phrases were: "don't study", "Father's Day", "lightning bug", "nuts and bolts", "scrub the kid", "traffic cop", and "who's got a friend". An alphabetical listing indicates that words beginning with 20

different letters were reported, with only the letters j, q, u, v, x, and z not represented.

DISCUSSION

A major feature, and advantage, of this demonstration is the wealth of discussion topics available to the instructor. I normally begin with a brief review of sensory deprivation studies, which leads into a discussion of hallucinations and of brain structure and function. One of the points I emphasize is that the brain needs varied stimulation. Students often pick up on this and ask questions about attention and states of consciousness, particularly about sleep and dreams. I will also sometimes discuss related issues, such as the research on split-brain patients and left-brain, right-brain differences.

I believe the most important thing to be gained from this demonstration is its relevance to one's viewpoint regarding human behavior, and hence, psychology. I will often write on the board several of the words or phrases reported by students, particularly those that are unique and unusual. I also ask the students to look at the list of the person next to them, and to notice the differences. I then point out that this demonstation seems to indicate that each of us is unique, each of us perceives our own reality. I emphasize that much of what can be gained from the study of psychology relates to an understanding of, and, hopefully, a tolerance and appreciation for, individual differences. I do, in fact, identify this as one of the most important objectives of the course. At this point in the demonstration a number of topics may be mentioned that relate to

perception or individual differences. I often discuss perceptual sets, giving examples, and point out the importance of motivation, emotion, and learning in perception and in producing differences between people.

Finally, I also discuss the similarities between this demonstration and projective techniques. While warning the students that we cannot "analyze" their lists to reveal aspects of their personality, I do suggest that occassionally words or phrases listed may represent a projection of something on the student's mind at the time. The reporting of "Kearney State" is an excellent example. This is more often reported during the Fall Semester than in the Spring (new students on campus in the Fall), and has never been reported by students in classes I have taught at other institutions!

This demonstration has been used successfully for at least ten years, and is always well received by students. It seems to prompt a good deal of discussion, is quite enjoyable, and is ideal for an initial class period where the instructor wants to introduce the students to the course and to stimulate interest. I believe the demonstration is also quite useful for identifying some of the important issues in psychology, and in the process of doing so, for revealing the fascination associated with the study of behavior.

Words Reported

A Agitate(9), Adjective(4), antidote(2), antelope, aggrevate, adjutant amputate(3), and look

B Burgundy, boat, burn the tape,Bengal, booka booka, bookman, by yourself

C Contemplate(21), concentrate(44),conjugate(11), cottonbowl, contradict, counterfeit(2), computate(6), classical, confidate, convocate(4), cut(3), cutting, category, congregate(5), carbonate, commentate, communicate, complicate(2), cotton bed, cotton pillows, coffee cake(2), cut the tape (3), class is over, consciousness(6), class today, constipate, carpentry(2), compensate(2), current debate, clavicle, can you, calculate, confiscate, coventry, cut the cake, can go, counter tape, count the disks, cotton field, cotton ball, cotton tail, crappy tape, clear the tape, carbon tape, cogitate (16), cognitive, cousin Ted, condo, comprendo

D don't study, drive a boat, double day, draw the drapes, does he take, do it again

E extravagant

F fun-filled, found a tape, find a tape(2), fabricate(16), frantically, fun, Father's Day(3), fuzzy takes, fuzzy tape(4), functional, fabric coat, frustrate, Faberge, fornicate, fabulate(2), frozen fish, fast and slow

G grab your coat(2), gravitate(3), good day, grab your book, grab the tape, gravity, get them, grab a boat, Geiser tape, gratitude, God is dead

H how do yo do(2), habitate(3), hibernate, have you paid, have a rope, hip, happy face(3), had a date(3), hesitate(2), had to take, had to go, had go, how's the tape, how's your tape, hide the soap

I it's funny

J

K Kearney State(15), kinds of goals, kinds of tape

L learn to take, lubricate, love-n-hate, lightning bug, light input, look now, let me go, let it go

M madrigal, medical, Mother's Day(3), Monday (2), magical(4), market day, meditate(3), magistrate, matching clothes

N nuts and bolts, nutty, nutty cake, not today(2), now you take, now you go, night before, nice and slow, night and day, night or day, ninety-fifth, not the tape(2), nothing fake, not your face, nothing close

O oh crammed, o friends

P patty cake(22), pageant, paddle the boat, permeate, practical, positive(6), plentiful, prejudice, president(2), propagate, patty melt, private, private boat, presto(2), pass a cake, pretend, pencil, pet nut but, prostrate(2), protege, property, perfect day, pancake, paddle soap

Q

R rapidly, run the tape

S study tape, stop the tape(4), scrub the kid, start the tape, side you take, Sunday(3), Saturday(6), shut the door, slimey coat, slimey face, satin clothes, satin pillows, satin bed, styrofoam, sagitate(5), side ache, smiley face, scrappy, salutate(3), side effect, savagely, Simon says, suffocate(2), seventeen, sound effect(2) sound of tape, study tape, sound input, strategy, stop to think

T try to say it, turkey steak, traffic cop, traffic boat, traffic count, time to go(2), time to float, the, turn the tape(5), tragically, trapezoid(5), tabulate, tragical(3), try the tape(6) touch toes, tragedy(10), try to go(2), try to tape, turn the page, type a page(3), that is eight, time for bed, tropical, tape, try to sleep, touch-pass the ball, type or tape, type of bed, time to go, throw the tape, the try, two of the tape, twenty k, true the tape, throughout the tape, tranquil, translate, travesty, time of day, today, tidal soap

U

V

W wonderful, Wednesday, we hate, what time is it, who got a pet, who's got a friend

X

Y you've got a pet, you've got a friend

Z